

# Potomac Heritage

Potomac Heritage  
National Scenic Trail

Northumberland, Westmoreland,  
Lancaster and Richmond counties,  
Virginia

## Explore Virginia’s Northern Neck

*The Northern Neck is a peninsula bounded by the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers, an area steeped in history and rich in scenic beauty. A network of bicycling routes connecting the birthplace of President George Washington, waterways that ushered in the steamboat era, and evolving landscapes chronicling ancient geology, allow you to explore from the slow lane.*

### Fish, Farms and Forests

The Northern Neck Heritage Trail Bicycling Route network embraces four counties on the Northern Neck and four centuries, weaving together the history of Captain John Smith’s explorations and native sons George Washington, Richard Henry Lee, Robert “King” Carter and James Monroe; the growth and demise of the steamboat era of the late 18th and early 19th centuries; and the lifeways evolved from an economy built upon fishing, farming and forestry and tourism.

During your journey, you will enjoy sandy beaches, wildlife preserves, nature trails, charming villages, historic mansions, museums, vineyards, sailing adventures, boat cruises to small islands, bike ferries, state parks, and the incomparable hospitality of the citizens. Prepare to slow down, relax, and learn about our nation’s timeless Potomac heritage, where American Indians maintained a rich culture before Captain John Smith first sailed these waters.

### Bicycling on the Northern Neck



The route network, part of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, includes a 95-mile “through-route” and eight connecting routes, or loops, of approximately 125 miles. Starting/end points are the historic town of Colonial Beach on the northwest and the Town of Reedville on the southeast where the Potomac meets the Chesapeake Bay.

As a whole, the route network invites you to create your own itinerary focusing on different parts of Northern Neck heritage. The map on the back, the list of references, and the Virginia highway map provide additional information to help you plan your itinerary.

The through-route includes the towns of Heathsville, Kinsale and Montross; the birthplaces of George Washington and of James Monroe; historic Rice’s Hotel/ Hughlett’s Tavern, Stratford Hall and former steamboat landings, as well as Westmoreland State Park, vineyards, and numerous creeks, rivers and public landings. Additional attractions along the loops include Hughlett Point and Hickory Hollow nature preserves; the Sunnybank and Merry Point ferries; several vineyards; Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge lands; historic Christ Church (1735), Menokin (c. 1769) and Leedstown; the Steamboat Era Museum and Mary Ball Washington Museum; and the towns of Kilmarnock, Irvington and Warsaw.



Stratford Hall



Christ Church



Reedville Fishermen's Museum



Colonial Beach pier



Merry Point ferry. Below, vineyard.





# Northern Neck Heritage Trail Bicycling Route Network

## Connecting People and Places

The Northern Neck Heritage Trail Bicycling Route network is a segment of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, a developing network of trails between the broad, gently flowing Potomac River as it empties into the Chesapeake Bay and the Allegheny Highlands in western Pennsylvania. The “braided” Trail network offers opportunities for hiking, bicycling, paddling, horseback riding and cross-country skiing. Other segments of the network include the Mount Vernon Trail and various Potomac Heritage Trail routes in Northern Virginia; the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Towpath; a bicycling route in Southern Maryland; and the Great Alleghany Passage.



## Places of Interest

### Reedville-Colonial Beach Route

**Reedville and Reedville Fishermen's Museum** Walk this fisherman's village and admire the stately sea captains' homes. Learn about the Chesapeake Bay “deadrise” fishing boats and sail on an historic skipjack. Enjoy the museum galleries. [www.rfmuseum.org](http://www.rfmuseum.org)

**Vir-Mar Beach** A small sandy beach on the Potomac offering strolling, relaxing, and birding opportunities. On clear days, the Smith Island Lighthouse can be seen, as well as the shores of Maryland. [www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt/siteasp?trail=1&loop=CNN&site=CNN10](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt/siteasp?trail=1&loop=CNN&site=CNN10)

**Rice's Hotel / Hughlett's Tavern** Restored 18th century tavern shows how people lived and traveled in the 18th and 19th century. Now operated as a store and restaurant. [www.rhhtfoundation.org](http://www.rhhtfoundation.org)

**Stratford Hall (1730)** Birthplace of Robert E. Lee and home to two Lee signers of the Declaration of Independence. Visit the Great House, the Mill, and the rare Miocene formation cliffs found in only three other places in the world. [www.stratfordhall.org](http://www.stratfordhall.org)

**Westmoreland State Park** On the shores of the Potomac, the park has primitive campsites, cabins, pool, and boat launch. [www.dcr.virginia.gov/state\\_parks/wes.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/wes.shtml)

**George Washington Birthplace** A National Park Service Monument, the birthplace complex includes a Visitors Center with a film, a memorial house, and a kitchen house and farm with a colonial herb and flower garden. [www.nps.gov/gewa](http://www.nps.gov/gewa)

**James Monroe Birthplace** Markers identify the birthplace of James Monroe, 5th President of the United States. There is also a small museum with Monroe artifacts. [www.monroefoundation.org](http://www.monroefoundation.org)

**Colonial Beach** Historic town on the Potomac River. Widest point of the Potomac River – 7 miles wide. [www.colonialbeachva.net](http://www.colonialbeachva.net)

### Loop Tours

**Belle Isle State Park** On the shores of the Rappahannock, the park has primitive campsites, indoor lodging, and pop-up trailer rentals. [www.dcr.virginia.gov/state\\_parks/bel.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/bel.shtml)

**Menokin** (c. 1769) Home of Francis Lightfoot Lee, signer of the Declaration of Independence. Visitors center depicting architectural conservation, hiking trails on a 325 acre wildlife refuge. [www.menokin.org](http://www.menokin.org)

**Mary Ball Washington Museum** Named for Lancaster Native and mother of George Washington, it houses historical exhibits in the old jail, clerks office, and Lancaster House. [www.mbwmm.org](http://www.mbwmm.org)

**Christ Church (1735)** One of the best preserved Colonial parish churches. The church is interpreted along with the life of Robert “King” Carter. [www.christchurch1735.org](http://www.christchurch1735.org)

**Morattico Waterfront Museum** Housed in the Morattico General Store building (1901), this local museum focuses on the cultural history of a working watermen's village. [www.morattico.org](http://www.morattico.org)

**Steamboat Era Museum** Learn about the paddle wheelers of yesterday that plied the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers. These waterways were the main highways of the past. [www.steamboatmuseum.org](http://www.steamboatmuseum.org)

## Planning Your Visit

This overview map shows a through-route and associated loops within four counties on the Northern Neck of Virginia, a network intended to function as a portal to the communities, history, culture, geology and ecology of the region. The list under “More Information” provides additional information to plan your journey.

**Seasons to Visit** The weather is “bicycle friendly” from April to November, although the temperate climate allows bicycling all year long. Spring and fall are ideal. An occasional summer day can be hot and muggy, but cooling breezes off the rivers mitigate the heat and humidity.

**Type of Bicycle** All of the routes are on paved surfaces. Either a road bike or hybrid would be appropriate. Give your bike a check-up and make sure it is in good working order.

**Traffic** Most of the routes are on lightly traveled secondary roads that criss-cross the Northern Neck. Some short sections of the routes are on Route 3 and Route 360 — very busy highways. Use caution when traveling on these portions.

**Terrain** The terrain is flat to gently rolling. Short hills are encountered when biking first down and then up occasional stream valleys.

**Camping** There are a dozen campgrounds, including two state parks, scattered throughout the four counties. You are never more than 20 miles from a campsite.

**Lodging** A wide variety of lodging is available, including bed & breakfasts, four-star inns, hotels, and marinas. You are never more than 20 miles from overnight accommodations.

### For More Information

Northern Neck Tourism Council, 800-393-6180, [www.northern-neck.org](http://www.northern-neck.org)

Virginia Tourism, [www.virginia.org](http://www.virginia.org)

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Tidal Potomac River Water Trail Map Set, state parks & preserves 800-933-PARK (cabin and campground reservations) [www.dcr.virginia.gov](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov)

Northern Neck RiverRide, (last Saturday in September) [www.riverride.org](http://www.riverride.org)

BikeWalk Virginia, [www.bikewalkvirginia.org](http://www.bikewalkvirginia.org)

Northern Neck Planning District Commission, [www.nnpdc.org](http://www.nnpdc.org)

Virginia Department of Transportation [www.virginiadot.org/programs/bk-default.asp](http://www.virginiadot.org/programs/bk-default.asp)

Adventure Cycling Association, (Tidewater Potomac Heritage Bicycling Route, a loop connecting Smith Point, VA.; Washington, D.C.; and Point Lookout State Park, MD <http://www.adventurecycling.org/routes/index.cfm>

National Park Service, George Washington Birthplace National Monument, 804-224-1732, [www.nps.gov/gewa](http://www.nps.gov/gewa)

Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, [www.nps.gov/pohe](http://www.nps.gov/pohe)

Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail [www.nps.gov/cajo](http://www.nps.gov/cajo)

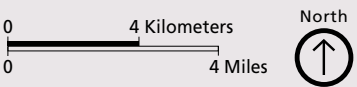


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- Primary Road
- Secondary Road - Paved
- Secondary Road - Unpaved
- Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail Through Route
- Local Loops (and Spurs)
- Public Water Access Site

- 1- Leedstown loop
- 2- Stratford Hall/ Currioman Landing loop
- 3- Montross/ Naylor's Beach/ Warsaw Loop
- 4- Kinsale/ Sandy Point loop
- 5- Heathsville Loop
- 6- Reedville/ Vir-Mar Beach/ Smith's Point Loop
- 7- Lancaster/ Morattico/ Belle Isle State Park Loop
- 8- Kilmarnock/ Irvington/ White Stone/ Windmill Point Loop



## Mileage for the Northern Neck Heritage Trail Through Route

### Northwest ➔ Southeast

- 0.0 Westmoreland County - King George County line
- 5.5 Colonial Beach
- 13.5 James Monroe Birthplace
- 22.7 George Washington's Birthplace Monument
- 33.6 Westmoreland State Park
- 35.5 Stratford Hall
- 40.5 Montross
- 70.0 Heathsville
- 83.3 Vir-Mar Beach
- 85.1 Sunnybank Ferry
- 88.7 Smith Point
- 93.6 Reedville

### Southeast ➔ Northwest

- 0.0 Reedville
- 4.9 Smith Point
- 8.5 Sunnybank Ferry
- 10.3 Vir-Mar Beach
- 23.6 Heathsville
- 53.1 Montross
- 58.1 Stratford Hall
- 60.0 Westmoreland State Park
- 70.9 George Washington's Birthplace Monument
- 80.1 James Monroe Birthplace
- 88.1 Colonial Beach
- 93.6 King George County - Westmoreland County line